



Birla Institute of Technology & Science, Pilani

Pilani | Dubai | Goa | Hyderabad | Mumbai (An Institution of Eminence)

Colonel Soumyabrata Chakraborty (Retd)
Registrar

S/1/23/2026/Jan/03

29 January 2026

OFFICE ORDER

Subject: Mental Health Promotion, Access and Wellness Policy (2025)

1. Preamble

BITS Pilani is a multi-campus and multi-modal Institute offering residential, work-integrated, and fully digital academic programmes. The Institute serves learners across diverse geographies, age groups, professional contexts, and life circumstances.

The Institute recognizes that mental health and emotional wellbeing are foundational to academic success, professional competence, ethical engagement, and personal dignity. BITS Pilani is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and psychologically supportive academic environment grounded in care, dignity, autonomy, and early support.

While the core values, rights, safeguards, and institutional responsibilities related to mental health remain uniform across the Institute, the nature of learners, pedagogical models, administrative structures, and risk environments differ across residential campuses, work-integrated programmes, and fully online programmes.

Accordingly, this Policy establishes:

- A single, unified Institute Mental Health Policy applicable to all members of the BITS Pilani community; and
- Programme specific Annexures that define differentiated implementation frameworks for off-campus and digital programmes.

This approach ensures equity without uniformity, consistency without rigidity, and care without over medicalization.

Uniform institutional policy aligned with NEP 2020

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Promote mental health and wellbeing as a core institutional value.
- Enable timely, accessible, and non-stigmatizing support.
- Strengthen preventive, promotive, and resilience-building practices.
- Ensure ethical, safe, and legally compliant responses to distress and crisis.
- Promote faculty and staff wellbeing as integral to institutional effectiveness.

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3. Applicability

This Policy applies to:

- All students (UG, PG, PhD, Research, Exchange, Practice School, WILP, Digital).
- All faculty members (permanent, adjunct, visiting, teaching assistants).
- All staff (academic, administrative, contractual).
- All campuses, off-campus programmes, and digital learning environments.
- All academic, administrative, and learner-support processes.

4. Guiding Principles

Implementation of this Policy shall be guided by the following principles:

- Dignity and Autonomy: Respect for individual choice and privacy.
- Non-Stigmatization: Mental health concerns shall not attract academic or disciplinary disadvantage.
- Early Support and Prevention: Emphasis on early identification and timely care.
- Least-Restrictive Intervention: Escalation only when clinically or ethically necessary.
- Equity of Access: Support irrespective of mode of study or physical location.
- Faculty and Staff Wellbeing: Recognized as essential to institutional wellbeing.

5. Legal and Ethical Alignment

This Policy is implemented in alignment with:

- The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017,
- Supreme Court directions on mental health in Higher Education Institutions,
- UGC Mental Health and Well-Being Policy for Higher Educational Institutions.
- UGC Framework Guidelines for Emotional and Mental Wellbeing,
- National Task Force recommendations, and
- Applicable professional, ethical, and data-protection standards.

Alignment shall be principle based, enabling adaptation to evolving legal and professional norms.

6. Governance Structure

6.1 Institute Wellness Council (IWC)

- Chaired by the Dean, Student Welfare.
- Members include faculty, clinicians, administrators, and student representatives.

Responsibilities:

- Policy oversight and interpretation.
- Approval of SOPs and Annexures.
- Budgeting and resource allocation.
- Annual reporting to the Senate.
- Mandatory submission to **UGC MANAS-SETU portal**



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6.2 Sub-Committees

- Campus Wellness Committees.
- WILP Mental Wellness & Support Committee.
- Digital Wellness Sub-Committee.

UGC uses *standardized nomenclature* ("Mental Health & Well-Being Centre", "Monitoring Committee").

7. Institute Mental Health Ecosystem

The Institute shall maintain a comprehensive, integrated mental health ecosystem that ensures access to professional support, preventive education, ethical data practices, reasonable academic accommodations, and clearly defined crisis response mechanisms across all modes of learning and engagement.

7.1 Sensitization, Capacity Building and Training

The Institute shall institutionalize mandatory mental health sensitization and capacity building programmes as a core preventive, promotive, and risk mitigation measure.

a) Faculty and Staff

Mandatory annual sensitization and training covering:

- Mental health literacy and stigma reduction,
- Early identification of psychological distress,
- Psychological First Aid (PFA),
- Suicide prevention gatekeeping, and
- Safe, ethical, and timely referral pathways.

Role-specific training shall be provided for mentors, wardens, learner-support staff, and administrators with defined escalation and decision-making responsibilities.

b) Learners

Mandatory induction modules addressing:

- Mental wellbeing and help-seeking behaviours,
- Academic stress management and work-life integration, and
- Awareness of institutional support services and escalation pathways.

Periodic reinforcement shall be provided through workshops, digital modules, and structured academic interactions.

c) Leadership and Decision-Making Roles

Targeted sensitization for Deans, Programme Heads, and senior administrators on:

- Ethical handling of mental health disclosures,
- Academic accommodations and flexibility, and
- Crisis decision-making and institutional responsibility.

Completion, coverage, and effectiveness of sensitization and training programmes shall be monitored institutionally.



7.2 Counselling & Psychological Support

On-Campus Students: Each campus shall provide access to qualified counsellors or clinical psychologists, available on-site and/or through secure online platforms.

- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) shall define confidentiality, informed consent, and emergency disclosure protocols in accordance with the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017.
- A 24×7 helpline shall be available for emotional support and crisis intervention.
- Integration with an AI-enabled ERP Wellness Dashboard may be used to flag early indicators of distress (such as attendance decline, low participation, or academic deterioration), subject to strict data protection and privacy safeguards.

On-campus counselling services and wellness infrastructure shall collectively function as the Institute Mental Health & Well-Being Centre, consistent with UGC guidelines.

7.3 Peer & Faculty Support

- Institutionalized Student Support Groups with trained peer leaders shall operate under professional supervision.
- Faculty mentors, wardens, and caretakers shall undergo certified Psychological First Aid and Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper training.
- Designated “Wellbeing Champions” among faculty and staff shall promote psychosocial literacy, help-seeking behaviour, and awareness within departments and units.

7.4 Academic & Daily Life Support

- Mental health and wellbeing themes shall be integrated into academic curricula, where appropriate (e.g., courses on social conduct, physical wellbeing, or life skills).
- Hostel and residential frameworks shall balance student autonomy with accountability and safety.
- ERP-linked monitoring of academic participation, attendance, and related indicators shall enable early outreach and supportive engagement.
- The Institute shall establish Resilience Labs and Life Skills Modules, co-designed by mental health professionals and faculty members.

7.5 Off-Campus Practice School (PS) Students – Online Support

- Students participating in off-campus PS programs are covered under 24×7 online counselling services, as on-campus support is not accessible.

8. Risk Management and Crisis Response

- Tiered and role-defined escalation pathways.
- Context-sensitive response based on learner location and programme.
- Emergency disclosure only in credible and high-risk situations.
- Post-crisis reintegration and academic continuity support.



On-Campus Escalation Pathway

Peer → Faculty Mentor/Warden → Counsellor → CMO → Dean/Associate Dean, SWD → Director

Off-Campus PS students Escalation Pathway

Online counsellor is first responder; escalation:

Online Counsellor → PS Faculty/Mentor → Dean/Associate Dean, PSD → Director → Parents (high-risk only)

Detailed procedures shall be specified in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

9. Academic Accommodation

Reasonable academic accommodations may include:

- Academic load reduction,
- Flexible timelines,
- Alternate or deferred examinations,
- Approved breaks or Leave of Absence, and
- Extended programme duration.

Accommodation processes shall be transparent, confidential, non-stigmatizing, and non-punitive.

10. Data Protection and Ethics

- Data minimization, confidentiality, and purpose limitation.
- Informed consent, wherever applicable.
- Mental health data shall not be used for:
 - Disciplinary action,
 - Performance evaluation, and
 - Surveillance or academic penalty.
- Aggregated data may be used only for institutional improvement.

11. Monitoring & Evaluation

- Counselling utilization, referral outcomes, and satisfaction reviews.
- Annual student, faculty, and staff wellbeing assessments.
- Annual Wellness Performance Report submitted to the Senate.
- Separate analytical reports generated for the following delivery contexts, contributing to a consolidated Institute-level review:
 - On-campus programmes,
 - Work Integrated Learning Programmes (WILP), and
 - BITS Digital/fully-online programmes.

by



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The Institute shall submit required annual data and compliance reports to the UGC MANAS-SETU portal, in accordance with UGC timelines and formats, without compromising individual confidentiality.

12. Communication and Awareness

- Policy dissemination through LMS, ERP, and official platforms.
- Accessible and multilingual formats.
- Periodic awareness and sensitization initiatives across the Institute.

13. Review of Policy

This Policy shall be reviewed every two years or earlier if required, under the Institute Wellness Council, with expert consultation.

Training coverage and effectiveness shall form part of the review.

14. Approving Authority

The Vice Chancellor, BITS Pilani, shall be the approving authority for the implementation of actions under this policy.


Col S Chakraborty (Retd)

Copy to: All Faculty, Students and Staff members.

